

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claim 1, as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) An image heating apparatus for heating an image formed on a recording material, comprising:

a metallic sleeve;

a heater contacting with the inner surface of said sleeve, ~~said heater being controlled so as to maintain a set temperature;~~

a temperature detecting element for detecting a temperature of said heater;

control means for controlling an electrical power supply to said heater so that the temperature detected by said temperature detecting element is maintained at a set temperature;

a backup member cooperating with said heater through said sleeve to form a nip for nipping and transporting the recording material; and

a metallic reinforcing member disposed in an interior of said sleeve,

wherein during a heating operation of heating the recording material by said heater, a surface temperature of said reinforcing member is 80% or less of a surface temperature of said sleeve.

2. (Original) An image heating apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising a holding member made of resin for holding said heater, wherein said reinforcing member reinforces said holding member.

3. (Original) An image heating apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein said reinforcing member is provided parallel to a lengthwise direction of said heater.

4. (Original) An image heating apparatus according to Claim 3, wherein said reinforcing member has an arch-shaped cross section, and is disposed so that an open side of the arch is opposed to said heater side, and said reinforcing member surrounds a safety element for preventing an excessive temperature rise of said heater.

5. (Original) An image heating apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein a distance between portions of said sleeve and said reinforcing member which are closest to each other is 2.0 mm or greater.

6. (Original) An image heating apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein an adiabatic member is provided on a surface of said reinforcing member which is opposed to said sleeve.

7. (Original) An image heating apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said sleeve has flexibility.